

JOHN BARNES GRANT

BY MONTY HEALY

John Barnes was (to be charitable) somewhat of a rogue who came to a tragic end. He was granted land at what is now the intersection of Bay Road and Loring Street in the 1627 Plymouth second division, which granted every man, woman and child 20 acres. There is no record of Barnes' arrival in Plymouth Colony, but he sold most of this granted land to Edmund Chandler in 1629 or 1630.

John Barnes became a wealthy man by the time of his death around 1670. He was involved in many land transactions over his lifetime, including many that were illegal or at the very least unfair. He frequently ended up in court as the plaintiff or defendant in a civil suit. As much as he appeared in court over civil disputes, he also had problems with drinking, and in 1669 he was "disenfranchised" for "frequent and abominable drunkenness." Basically, servers were "prohibited to let John Barnes have any liquors, wine or strong drink at any time." Although he was in court several times for drunkenness, the offense in March 1652/3 seems to have topped them all. He was accused of drunkenness and then appeared in court drunk, was fined £10 and ordered to post an additional £40 bond for his good behavior. This penalty had little or no effect. A local historian, Christopher Daley, has a series of ghost story lectures, one of which involves John Barnes. Although I am not a believer in the occult, there are parts of the story that are based on fact. According to the story, John sold some liquor to Massasoit, the Sachem of the Wampanoag tribe. Massasoit failed to pay Barnes and returned to his home village, Pokanoket (near Bristol R.I.) in a form of retirement. After that, Barnes chased Massasoit's son Wamsutta for his money.

Eventually, the dispute was settled by Wamsutta deeding land in Freetown to Barnes. The Wampanoag tribe believed Wamsutta had no right to sell the land, so they put a curse on it. And if you know anything about the Freetown Forest (Massachusetts' largest state forest) it does seem to be cursed. There have been murders there, human sacrifices by cults, dead animals and all sorts of unusual events. I attribute a lot of what has occurred there to the area being a veritable jungle, a thick forest and extremely desolate. Google it sometime. Wamsutta did deed land in Freetown to John Barnes "for sundry articles taken up at his shop." It was sort of a "good faith" purchase. The deeded land extended from the bay "four miles into the woods," so there are some things about the ghost story that are true.

An aside here, Massasoit's other name was Ousamequin, and the Healy brothers spent a couple summers at the YMCA Camp Ousamequin on Monponsett Pond in Halifax. We referred to it as Camp O-sanquentin.

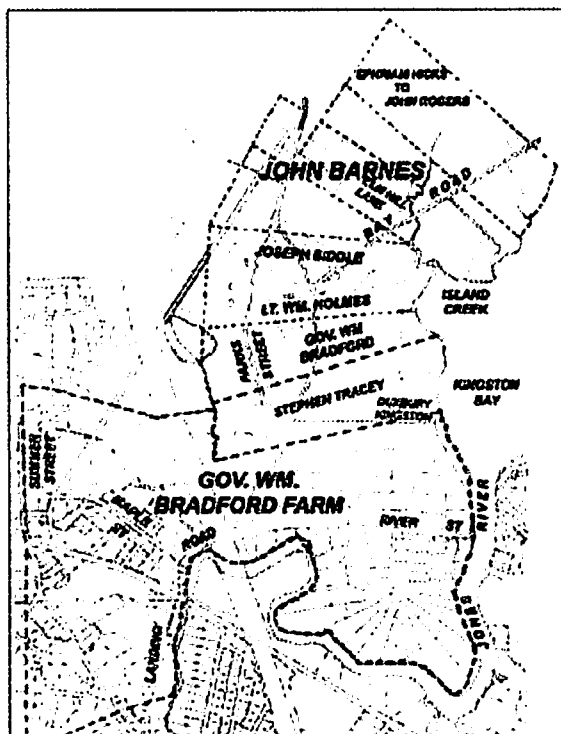
Barnes met with a catastrophic, untimely, and perhaps kismet death. While leading his cattle into his barn, he "guided" the bull and the bull turned on him and gored him severely. He died within 32 hours, circa 1670. Prior to his death, he deeded a substantial portion of his property to John Rogers, the brother of Joseph Rogers, who owned property at the mouth of the Jones River. John Rogers was also deeded a large tract of land from Ephriam Hicks. John's property passed through his son John Jr. and his grandson, also named John. When the third John died, he left the property to his four daughters. One of his daughters was married to Lt. Samuel Bradford, Governor Bradford's grandson. Lt. Samuel bought out the interests of the other three sisters. And that is how the Bradford family established a presence at Island Creek. Lt. Bradford's son, the

Hon. Gamaliel Bradford, was a judge at the Court of Common Pleas. The Honorable Gamaliel and his wife, Abigail (Bartlett), had 10 children, including six sons. His second son, Capt. Samuel was a member of The Committee of Correspondence prior to the Revolutionary War. The Committee of Correspondence was a group of patriots who rallied opposition to the British crown and made plans for collective action among the colonies.

Capt. Samuel was the commander of a company in Col. Cotton's regiment in the Revolution. He suffered "over exertion" during the Trenton and Princeton campaigns in New Jersey. He died while on furlough.

Capt. Samuel's sons Samuel and Isaiah built houses on the estate. Samuel's son Prince Bradford built a house in 1815 next to his father's at what is now 42 Elm Hill Lane, currently the residence of Bill and Cheri Boyd. Isaiah built his house in 1804 at what is now 81 Elm Hill Lane, the current residence of Bob and Jane Hale. Isaiah had been building ships as early as 1794, at the age of 25, in a shipyard owned by his uncles Peter and then Seth, sons of the Hon. Gamaliel.

In 1811 Seth Bradford sold the Island at Island Creek to Isaiah. If you should chance to walk the roadway (with the owner's permission, of course), from Elm Hill Lane you can see how it curves and could line up with the roadway on the Sullivan-Bucci property (see Holmes/Biddle "The Island at Island Creek," Duxbury Clipper, Dec. 24, 2014). When Bay Road (Border Street) was built, they made the roadway intersections more perpendicular to the "new" street.



The map of the Barnes' grant.



Isaiah Bradford's house (Prince Bradford's uncle) (c1804) now the residence of Bob and Jane Hale at 81 Elm Hill Lane.



Prince Bradford house (c1815) now the residence of Bill and Cheri Boyd, at 42 Elm Hill Lane.

Courtesy Photos



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